

Portrait of Alan Cumming unveiled at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery



If you are a fan of *The Good Wife* then you will know him as Eli Gold who has all the answers for every situation, and on Broadway right now he is starring with Emma Stone in *Cabaret*. Alan Cumming is a Scottish actor of considerable stature who warmed the cockles of our hearts in *Who Do you Think you Are?* when he traced his family roots, and who also has just published his autobiography *Not My Father's Son: A Family Memoir* (2014) which tells us more about that whole experience. But now we have him (or at least a portrait of him) right here in the middle of Edinburgh.

The portrait by Christian Hook is to replace the portrait of The Queen on the ground floor of the gallery.

An impressive, unconventional and vibrant portrait of the actor, this is the result of a nationwide artistic competition, and it is displayed for the first time today at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh.

Alan Cumming OBE is an outstanding Scottish actor, who enjoys an international reputation. He studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow and has appeared to critical acclaim in numerous films, television programmes and plays in Scotland, London and New York, where he now lives. He has also forged a reputation as a highly successful writer.

This portrait is the winning commission for the Sky Arts Portrait Artist of The Year 2014 competition. The artist, Christian Hook, who is from Gibraltar, studied at Middlesex University, and has lectured on the art of Illustration at the

Royal College of Art. The competition lasted ten months and involved heats being held around the country in order to find new portrait painters. As the winner, in addition to securing this prestigious commission which now enters the collection of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Hook has received a year's supply of art materials. He painted Alan Cumming in New York; the actor is depicted on stage, before a row of footlights, with a top hat before him, which refers to his role in *Cabaret*. Other details, such as his chosen tartan, allude to Cumming's political convictions, as a supporter of Scottish independence.

Sky Arts Portrait Artist of The Year 2014 airs on Sky Arts 1 at 8pm on Tuesdays. A special episode detailing Christian Hook's experiences of painting Alan Cumming – *Portrait Artist of the Year: Painting Alan Cumming* – will air tonight. The presenters of the series, Joan Bakewell and Frank Skinner, along with Alan Cumming and Christian Hook, were filmed at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery for the series finale.

Christopher Baker, Director of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery commented: *"This extraordinary portrait celebrates the art of performance. It's a remarkable tribute to a widely admired actor and an impressive work of painterly drama, which displays the skills of a talented artist, whose work will now become more widely recognised."*